DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 143 599 CS 003 599

AUTHOR Angelotti, Michael
TITLE Psycholinguistics and the Reading Language Arts Teacher: A Time for Learning.
PUB DATE Mar 77
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on English Education (15th, Knoxville, Tennessee, March 24-26, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Concept Teaching; Continuous Learning; *Course Descriptions; *English Education; Higher Education; *Language Arts; *Psycholinguistics; *Reading Instruction; Reading Processes; *Teacher Education Curriculum

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a college course that relates psycholinguistics to language-arts instruction. The course structure is designed to achieve several objectives for the student: understanding of reading as a psycholinguistic process that interacts with listening, writing, and speaking processes; awareness and understanding of the many aspects of language study; ability to draw practical applications for teaching, from a study of reading and other linguistic processes; and ability to use teacher reference materials in the language arts, particularly in reading. Involvement in group projects is emphasized as a means of developing independent learning habits, enabling students to become continuing self-educators as well as classroom teachers. (RL)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED143699

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Psycholinguistics and the Reading Language Arts Teacher:

A Time for Learning

Michael Angelotti
College of Education
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, Texas 79409

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Michael Angelotti

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND THE ERIC SYSTEM CONTRACTORS."

CS023 599

I happened to be in the audience at the 1977 Texas State Council of the International Reading Association meeting in Austin when Rudine Sims delivered a general session speech on psycholinguistics and reading. She reviewed the emergence of psycholinguistics and pointed out several aspects ("myths") of conventional reading education now challenged by proponents of a psycholinguistic concept of the reading process (particularly Kenneth and Yetta Goodman). She was direct, pleasant and committed. She drew a standing ovation from the more than three hundred classroom teachers and supervisors of English and reading present. Several thoughts occurred to me as I evaluated this experience and the conference in general. One, language arts teachers want to know about psycholinguistic thought; two, they are ready to act on that knowledge; three, the reaction occurs just as readily among secondary teachers as elementary and four, English Educators had better gear up for psycholinguistics now before we are forced to play catch up later.

Sure enough, the two sessions at CEE a few weeks later drew over sixty people, most of whom had little knowledge of psycholinguistics but were feeling some pressure to learn about it in a hurry. They, like me, must be feeling vibrations from the field. Many language arts teachers in the schools express dissatisfaction with conventional reading and language approaches. They are not at all pleased with the results of instruction as compared to the energy expanded to effect it. It is this displeasure, perhaps, which accounts for the tendency of most language arts teachers to not rebutt the public censure of reading and writing instruction. They probably agree with the censure, but from a different perspective and for different reasons.

Psycholinguistics has a growing appeal because it verifies our intuitions of how reading and other language processes work. It says, in sum, that the language process is an organic whole consisting of interactive, interrelating, listening, speaking, reading and writing processes which are derived from and reflect thinking process. It also suggests, as I view it, that reading and writing are better learned intuitively by reading and writing practice in and of interesting content than by the arbitrary, directed skill instruction common to most reading and other lanugage arts approaches.

The chief fault is not so much in the skill concept as it is in the fractionization of language processes that skills instruction often causes, resulting in skill-educated (if that), but poor readers and writers because skill treatment is too often isolated from meaning and natural language processes. Phonics, for example, <u>becomes</u> reading rather than an approach designed to strengthen sound-print relationships. Phonics is not an end, but a means to improved comprehension. Good oral reading becomes the goal of the reader rather than proficient silent reading. In writing, punctuation and other usage rules become the end of learning rather than a means to increased writing facility. Psycholinguistics does not refute skills approaches, per se, but rather asks that they be balanced in a total language view which has as its objective an independent, proficient language processer. It is curious that in the arguments between psycholinguistics and skills adherents, we sometimes forget that skills, like psycholinguistic models, are nonfacts, that is, they are intuitionally derived and nourished. Skills, by their longstanding existence in professional literature, however, often take on the nature of fact in the minds of educators.

The point of this paper, however, is not so much concerned with that argument as it is with the need for English Educators to understand what psycholinguistics has to offer the profession and its students. The most readable writers in psycholinguistic thought that I have encountered are Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith. The most readable journals have been The Reading Teacher (IRA), The Journal of Reading (IRA), and Language Arts (NCTE). Knowledge of the works of these writers and of relevant content in the journals since 1965 should equip anyone to begin a course similar to the one described in the following pages.

Much of the professional writing about psycholinguistics relevant for teachers takes reading as its focus and generally treats other aspects of language in only as much detail as is necessary to fully describe reading process. Although speaking, listening and writing are equally significant elements of human language experience, examination of them as psycholinguistic phenomena has yet to produce a concentration of literature approaching that of reading process. Given this central place of reading in present psycholinguistic research, the dependency of school children on reading to learn (survive) and the increasing trend of making English language arts teachers overnight reading teachers, it follows that reading ought to be the point of departure for a first course in psycholinguistics for reading/language arts teachers, particularly if it represents the only course they are likely to encounter which examines psycholinguistics and language arts teaching.

The course description which follows is derived from a course presently offered as an undergraduate reading requirement for reading majors as well as an elective for both elementary and secondary English language arts students.

It has proved readily adaptable to graduate study and components of it have been used effectively in inservice seminars.

The structure of the course is based on sets of expected outcomes and assumptions which arise from psycholinguistic thought and from a concern for graduating a well-prepared public school teacher. It reflects not only the central theme of reading but also that reading does not occur in a vacuum. It assumes, therefore, that a reasonable understanding of reading process and appropriate use of that concept in the schools require that reading be seen organically as one part of the total language ability of the child.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Students should understand reading as psycholinguistic process.

   Building on an understanding of Kenneth Goodman models (Goodman, 12-19) students examine a concept of reading process based on transformational theory. Meaning is the beginning and end of reading experience. Simply, an author expresses his ideas as graphic display via his deep structure and transformational rules; the reader perceives this print as language and reconstructs the intended meaning according to his transformational rules and deep structure. Prior linguistic experience is the significant factor which determines the degree of reconstruction achieved by the reader.

   Although it would add greater depth to personal insight, it is not necessary for either the instructor or the student to know the details of transformational theory in order to understand implications of the psycholinguistic concept of reading as they might apply to public school language arts education. The trick for the instructor is to

know how much transformational grammar is "just enough" for a particular class to accept psycholinguistic models as credible visualizations of reading and other language processes.

2. The student will understand the relative place of reading and how it interacts with listening, writing and speaking. If reading is to be treated as an organic part of the total linguistic process, then the other component parts must also be studied as they relate to reading and human abilities to produce and receive language. The important point is that the concept of "reading and the language arts" changes to become "reading as one of the language arts."
3. The student should be aware of the several aspects of language study and have some understanding of the major ones. Most people have a narrow view of language and reading. The study of grammar suggests parts of speech, sentence diagramming (lately revived) and usage. The teaching of reading means skills, basal readers and phonics. It is useful, therefore, to make a distinction between grammar and usage, and to discuss the prescriptive and descriptive functions of at least the traditional, structural and transformational approaches to the study of language. Such a strategy reduces misperceptions and confusion in later references to grammar as psycholinguists view it. An understanding of language acquisition and development, dialect and semantics is necessary not only to broaden the student's general concept of language but also to help him appreciate the complexity and interdependency of linguistic processes. The implications of this understanding allow the student to grasp the potential of psycholinguistics for providing

a context for teaching language arts and to place the use of conventional skills approaches in a perspective more consistent with natural language learning processes of students.

4. The student will draw practical applications for teaching from a study of reading and other linguistic processes. This is what it is all about. Inherent in making applications from theory to practice is the transfer principle. Just as many school children often fail to transfer skills learned in reading and writing classes to general language performance, so do college students experience difficulty in making practical application from theory courses. Part of the problem, I suspect, lies in a conditioned learning behavior which rewards compartmentalizing learning units and maintaining short term memory of unrelated concepts (for tests or papers). Another part most certainly is related to limited teaching experience, making the establishment of a realistic conceptual framework and significant retention of interrelated ideas virtually impossible. Those students who address the course with the most intensity have been those, by and large, who had classroom teaching experience or who were student teaching at the time they were taking the course. Creating a course environment which invites such students to interpret actual teaching episodes psycholinguistically seems to help them and their less experienced colleagues more fully internalize course concepts and more easily make the transfer between theory and practice.
5. The student should know and be able to use teacher reference materials in the language arts, particularly reading. The classroom teacher

ought to be an independent learner. It has been my experience that most education students do not have the independent learning habit and, therefore, are not inclined to become continuing self-educators when they become classroom teachers. They are likely to leave contemporary educational thought in their college notebooks and are prone to acquiesce to the norm of their respective places of employment. One way to encourage an independent learning habit is to give it value. The group study component of the course (discussed later) was specifically designed to encourage students to appreciate the potential of the professional journals to meet practical teaching needs. They need to learn the language of professional journals, how to evaluate the content for specific purposes and how to transfer appropriate knowledge to classroom practices. After the initial course, most teacher needs in psycholinguistics can be served by publications of the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English.

For most students the word "psycholinguistics" is as intimidating as the theories it embraces. They need a connection between it and concepts they have internalized about language process and reading. The Kenneth Goodman half (39 pages) of Reading Process and Program (Goodman and Niles, 1970) is an excellent short book to use as an introduction to applied psycholinguistics. It may be the only book at this point in time that presents a comprehensive view of psycholinguistic thought in language that students (by their own testment) can read independently. The most effective feature of the work in terms of student understanding is Goodman's treatment of psycholinguistic models, which clearly relate reading and the other language processes. Careful

explication of the essential premises of the text through class discussion should result in general understanding of psycholinguistics and its potential for effecting positive change in language education.

In the design of the course, then, Process is used as a primer for later, more technical readings, giving students basic knowledge about and encouraging fluency in the language of psycholinguistic thought. Towards this purpose, I have found it useful to key topic headings of the text directly to items designated for study during the first segment of the course (roughly 1/3 semester) as follows:

1. The psycholinguistic concept
2. The nature of language (spoken language model)
3. Perception in reading, listening
4. Information used during the reading process (early reading model)
5. Information used during the reading process (oral, proficient reading models)
6. Application of reading
7. Adaptation in reading
8. Vocabulary problems
9. Objectives of the reading curriculum: competence, performance
10. Objectives of the reading curriculum: comprehension
11. Developing sophistication in reading

Important points within each topic are identified for students and discussed prior to their independent study of the text. For example, "The nature of language" is broken down according to these concepts:

The Nature of Language

patterns	generate language
pattern of patterns	imitation
syntax	rules
grammar	deep language structure
inflections	surface structure
pattern markers	encoding
junction words	meaning
model of speech	aural input
decoding	sampling
cues	prediction
redundancy	context

Discussions following a reading assignment attempt to evaluate and improve comprehension of that portion of the text.

Another useful introductory piece is Reading: A Conversation with Kenneth Goodman, a thirteen-page pamphlet distributed (free at this writing) by Scott, Foresman as a promo for its "Reading Unlimited" series for grades K-8. Copyrighted in 1976, it updates Process in uncomplicated prose and synthesizes much of psycholinguistic thought as it relates to reading process. Students' ability to read and discuss it intelligently convinces them that they have learned something most thought impossible a month earlier. Knowing Goodman is basic to understanding psycholinguistics as it interprets reading process. Other views are encountered in the remaining two-thirds of the course, presently featuring Language and Learning to Read (Hodges and Rudorf, 1970) and small-group research projects.

The Hodges book is a well-conceived anthology of conference papers, matching theoretical and applications articles directed to aspects of language as they intersect with reading processes. Its level of technical language, however, is more sophisticated than it needs to be for typical undergraduate readers, even with the Goodman preparation preceding it. A coherent, comprehensive, "transi-

tional" methods book applying psycholinguistic concepts to language arts teaching waits to be written.

As if to verify this point, students frequently identity the Goodman works, class discussions, and the group projects as the most meaningful parts of the course, with the latter judged most significant. They often point to four benefits of the small group research:

1. A wide range of critical information presented in language they can understand readily.
2. An awareness of and skill in using professional literature.
3. A pulling together of previous course content into practical teaching perspective.
4. A permanent collection of in-depth current reports specifically directed to their learning/teaching needs.

Student involvement in the group projects begins with a general discussion of the possible directions group projects can take and the potential value they might have. Decisions are made and a course guide for doing the group work is written. Students group themselves and then select a study topic from an annotated list which reflects ten critical areas of knowledge for language arts education. In order of discussion, the ten areas are:

1. Language acquisition and development
2. Dialects and reading
3. Writing acquisition and development
4. Perception and reading
5. Listening and reading

6. Decoding
7. Reading process
8. Miscue analysis
9. Semantics and reading
10. Approaches to teaching/language arts

To guide students in their research efforts, each topic entry includes a beginning set of research (purpose) questions and a starter bibliography. The "dialect" topic, for example, is described as follows:

#2. Dialect: The Influences of Dialect on Reading Acquisition and Development

Q. What is the "standard dialect" by definition? How do those dialects which vary significantly from the "standard" differ from it? What effect do these differences have on learning to read and on the development of reading proficiency? Be specific. How are so-called "dialect problems" dealt with in the classroom?

Starter Bibliography

Tabbert, Russell. "Dialect Differences and the Teaching of Reading and Spelling." Elementary English 51, 1097-1099.

Black Dialects and Reading. National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois, 1974. Bernice E. Cullinan, ed.

Goodman, Lillian. "Juan's Right to Read." American Education (July, 1970).

(Also see Dr. Leona Foerster, expert-in-residence TTU).

Tentative Presentation Date: March 7 (following Chapter 3)

The strengths of this student independent study approach to a course in psycholinguistics appear to be these:

1. It presents a clear statement of purpose and action.
2. It is quality oriented.
3. The combination of instructor and peer audience provides extraordinary motivation to perform well.
4. It addresses two important problems (especially to students), evaluation and boredom, with good success.
5. As a cooperative agreement, it has the impact of a legal contract, reducing misunderstanding and devious manipulation of assignments.
6. Significant aspects of content are interpreted by students and presented in language more easily understood by the majority of students than that which they normally encounter in the professional literature of psycholinguistics.
7. Since copies of each research report are duplicated for everyone, each student leaves the course with a current, practical resource packet relevant to his teaching field.

As a technique for dealing with difficult content, the group research projects have been effective, but not flawless. Meeting with complete groups for evaluative sessions outside of the regular class hour is sometimes a problem. Although most presentations are imaginative and effective, some students simply are not exciting in their expressiveness. Evaluation by peers is not considered "fair" by all students; some liken their situation on presentation day to that of a pinned butterfly in a display case. A few

students, in their enthusiasm for learning, find their way into the psychology stacks, not admitting to their inevitable confusion until the day before the written paper is due.

Projects: Components and Views

1. Research

As a member of a small group of students, you will review professional and other publications for literature regarding your selected topic. The intent is that you have an opportunity (1) to know field-related resources that you can use as a teacher, (2) to acquaint yourself with a personal research procedure and (3) to give yourself an opportunity for in-depth understanding of at least one sub-topic of the course selected on the basis of your own interest.

2. Publication

Group findings are written into a coherent, informal paper; duplicated for each member of the class and possibly rewritten for publication in a journal of your field. By the end of the course each student will have an up-to-date, practical resource packet with references to at least ten different aspects of the teaching field under study. Each report contains at least these elements:

a. An introduction or discussion of the research question and possible implications for teaching.

b. A summary of the group findings spiced with your own thoughts on various ideas, written coherently and with your audience in mind.

c. An annotated bibliography which lists your readings by author, title, publisher or journal, publication date, pages, volume, etc. The brief comment on the publication should not only focus on what the writer was attempting to discover, but also, on what he concluded as the result of his study. First priority are articles, etc., written in the '70's.

d. A discussion of teaching suggestions, techniques and approaches derived from the group study to treat specific problems assoicated with that area investigated.

3. Oral Presentation

Each group will attempt to communicate what they have learned about their particular topic, helping the rest of us understand the written report as well as extending the written report with demonstrations, by example, with additional information, etc. The challenge is to do it in an interesting way.

4. Evaluation

The chief concerns are for quality and usefulness to the class members as t[illegible]ers. Individual grades will be given based on my and your perceptions of each student's participation in prewriting tasks, the actual written product, and the oral presentation. It would be to each group member's advantage to have a piece of the oral show roughly equivalent to that of the other members of the group, especially in terms of significance of role. Organization, demonstration of felt knowledge, and creativity of approach are other factors to consider in putting together

your presentation. Groups should arrange for a conference with me following the presentation to give me further insights into these elements of evaluation. More objective criteria may be in order at the discretion of the class or individual groups. Present me with a way more to your liking that makes sense to me. I am open to all suggestions.

Projects: Suggested Procedure for Determination of Grade

History

Generally projects have been valuable aspects of the course and well received by participating students. There have been two problems, however consistently noted by students (and me): boredom with some oral presentations and a "fair" method of arriving individual grades.

Boredom

As I see it, boredom is most often the product of either knowing too much about the subject under discussion or too little. Since the latter possibility more frequently prevails in our case, I offer the following solutions to the problem: (1) print-outs should be ready for distribution to the class no later than the class date immediately preceding the oral presentation date. Careful study of such materials would then be a required assignment as readiness for oral presentations. Part of the oral presentation should allow class members an opportunity to comment on and ask questions about the printed document. If prereading readiness occurs, then meaningful discussion time is more likely. The result will be value. If such oral discussion periods become as valuable to the audience as the presenting group, then boredom cannot happen, (2) tasteful use of visual aids (i.e. overhead projector, charts) to avoid the old

"group member-take-a-turn-reading" approach will probably make the presentation a better learning experience.

Grades

The key question centers on how to determine grades individually so that they are perceived by students as fairly given. I offer the following procedure:

1. Classmembers evaluate presentation period and print-out (1/3 of grade). Criteria should include quality, organization, "knowing" (that the group members know what they are talking about) and value to the individual as a growing professional. A simple form will be made to facilitate this process. Secret ballot.
2. Group members evaluate each other in a similar fashion (1/3 of grade), but also include such criteria as quality of readiness work and responsibility (making meetings, getting work done on time, etc.)
3. In a brief conference in my office class and peer evaluations will be tallied and discussed. I will give my input (1/3 of grade) and the actual individual grade will be determined.
4. A description of individual roles should be included as part of the print-out. Work should be as evenly divided as is reasonable and practical for the tasks to be performed well. Turn in masters and extra copies to me.
5. Each person should have an oral, demonstrable role. Probably, a combination of knowing (talking off the printed page to the audience) and appropriate quoting (reading) will serve the individual group member best during the presentation period.

The key thing is to make the group presentations valuable time. Good grades will naturally follow that. It is quite unlikely that everything read and heard will be understood, but we should come out of each presentation with a clear idea of its content, its connection to the course and its immediate importance to us as classroom teachers.

Bibliography

Hodges, Richard E. and Rudorf, E. Hugh, ed. Language and Learning to Read. Boston: Hougton Mifflin Company, 1972.

Goodman, Kenneth S. and Niles, Olive S. Reading Process and Program. National Council of Teachers of English, 1970.

Goodman, Kenneth S. Reading: A Conversation with Kenneth Goodman. Scott, Foresman and Company, 1976.